

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)

What is foot and mouth disease and what causes it?

Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease of cloven-hoofed (two-toed) animals (e.g., cattle, pigs, sheep). FMD causes painful sores and blisters on the feet, mouth and teats of animals.

Foot and mouth disease is a high consequence livestock disease due to its potential for rapid spread, severe trade restrictions and the subsequent economic impacts that would result.

The disease occurs in parts of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America, but has been eradicated from North America, Australia, New Zealand, Greenland, Iceland, and most of Europe.

What animals get FMD?

FMD affects cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, deer, and other cloven-hoofed animals. Other animals that have been found susceptible include hedgehogs, armadillos, nutrias, elephants, capybaras, rats and mice. Foot-and-mouth disease does not affect horses.

How can my animal get FMD?

Foot-and-mouth disease is spread by **direct contact**, such as when a healthy animal touches, rubs, or licks an animal that is sick. The virus may also spread by **aerosol** depending on environmental temperature and humidity. Animals may also become infected from eating (**oral**) contaminated feed or by contact with contaminated objects (**fomites**). FMD virus can be carried on clothes, shoes, vehicles and even in the nasal passages of people that have had contact with infected animals.

How does FMD affect my animal?

The most common signs of foot and mouth disease are fever and the formation of blisters, ulcers and sores on the mouth, tongue, nose, feet, and teats. Foot lesions occur in the area of the coronary band and between the toes. Infected cattle are depressed, reluctant to move, and unwilling or unable to eat, which can lead to decreased milk production, weight loss, and poor growth. Affected animals may also have nasal discharge and excessive salivation. Pigs often have sore feet but less commonly develop mouth lesions. Sheep and goats show very mild, if any, signs of disease, however they can still spread the virus. Death is uncommon from this disease, but it can occur in young animals. Permanent hoof damage and chronic mastitis can occur.

Can I get FMD?

Infections in humans are extremely rare. Mild blister like lesions can occur. FMD is not considered to be a public health problem.

Who should I contact if I suspect FMD?

Contact your veterinarian immediately. FMD is not currently found in the United States; suspicion of the disease requires immediate attention.

How can I protect my animal from FMD?

To prevent the introduction of FMD, use strict biosecurity procedures on your farm. Isolate any new introductions or animal returning to the farm for several weeks before introducing them into the herd. Minimize visitors on your farm, especially those that have traveled from countries with FMD. Clean coveralls and boots should be worn when contact with livestock is expected. These items should remain on the farm and be cleaned and disinfected prior to re-use. Thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment and animal areas. Monitor your animals for signs of the disease. Isolate any ill animals and contact your veterinarian immediately.

For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Foot and mouth disease at http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/foot_and_mouth_disease.pdf

USAHA Foreign Animal Diseases (*The Gray Book*) at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/emergency_response/downloads/nahems/fad.pdf

World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) Foot and mouth disease information at <http://www.oie.int/animal-health-in-the-world/official-disease-status/fmd/>

Foot and Mouth Disease is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals and has severe economic consequences.



Photos from Oregon State Extension and Dr. Stuart Thompson, Medical College of Georgia